

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 98**

LD TITLE: "Resolve, Directing the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife To Study Issues Related to Bear Hunting and Management" (HP0080)

SPONSORED BY: Representative WOOD of Sabattus

**CO-SPONSORED BY: Senator JACKSON of Aroostook,
Representative GIFFORD of Lincoln, Representative BLACK of
Wilton, Representative SHAW of Standish, Representative
THERIAULT of Madawaska, Representative JOHNSON of Eddington**

DATE OF HEARING: February 12, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Dutremble, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Jim Connolly, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking IN OPPOSITION To L.D. 98.

L.D. 98 requires the Department to study issues related to bear hunting and the management of the bear population in the state and we certainly appreciate Representative Wood's concern for this valuable resource.

The Department is directed in statute to manage the wildlife resources of the state for their preservation, protection, enhancement and use. As part of that work the Department undertakes a planning effort that is known as the Species Planning Process which includes convening a Big Game Working Group. This working group includes representatives of the many groups interested in wildlife from consumptive and non-consumptive users, landowners, outdoor based tourism, as well as forestry and agricultural interests. This effort blends the biological information brought forth by the state's wildlife biologists employed by the Department with the needs, interests and social concerns of the working group. The outcome is management goals and objectives for each species that are derived from sound science and public participation. In this forum we believe the Department's mandate for managing the wildlife resources of the State are met while balancing the concerns of the citizens and visitors to Maine. At this time the Department is reconvening that species planning effort with the goal of having a

new Species Management Plan in place in 2015. The Department in preparation for that effort is working with the University of Maine on a study of the population dynamics of bears based on the Department's nationally recognized black bear study. This information will be used in the update of the black bear management system. We would respectfully suggest that this effort be allowed to be carried out without the constraints imposed by this Resolve while still meeting the intention of the Bill. We ask this so that the Department may continue its strong tradition of responsibly managing the wildlife resources of the state on behalf of the people of the State of Maine.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.